

Senator Figueroa Encourages Celebration of Women's History Month

SACRAMENTO – On Monday, March 17, 2003, Senator Liz Figueroa (D-Fremont) will present Senate Concurrent Resolution 13, declaring March 2003 as "Women's History Month" on the Senate Floor. The measure honors the many contributions women have made throughout history, and encourages Californians to join in the celebration of International Women's Day.

"Women have played an important role in every step of our history, but unfortunately their accomplishments are often overlooked," said Figueroa, Vice Chair for the California Legislative Women's Caucus. "Women's History Month provides an opportunity for schools and communities to emphasize the many accomplishments of women in California and the United States."

A forum for acknowledging women's history began in California in 1977, when the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women initiated "Women's History Week." They chose the week surrounding March 8th, International Women's Day, in order to provide a multicultural perspective. The activities surrounding Women's History Week received an enthusiastic response, and within a few years Women's History Week became a National celebration. In 1987, Congress declared March as Women's History Month. Today, Women's History Month is a major national and international celebration.

In 1987, as part of Women's History Month, the California Legislative Women's Caucus began honoring one woman from each Senate and Assembly district with the Legislative "Woman of the Year" award. As a forum for honoring remarkable women throughout California the chosen honorees are invited to come to the Capitol and be recognized for their accomplishments. Historically, the women were recognized as "Woman of the Year" in a formal ceremony on the floors of the Senate and Assembly.

However, this year, the Senate chose to honor their "Woman of the Year" recipients in individual ceremonies within the Senate districts, rather than at the State Capitol. "By honoring a 'Woman of the Year' in our own districts rather than at the Capitol we achieve two goals," said Figueroa. "We continue the celebration of the many women who have made significant contributions to our community, but we also do our part to remain fiscally responsible this budget year where we are, unfortunately, forced to cut spending for so many quality programs."

Senator Figueroa, past President of the California Elected Women's Association for Education and Research (CEWAER), is also a board member of Women in Government. She will honor Senate District 10's "Woman of the Year" at a formal luncheon in Fremont today.